DISPLACED COMMUNITIES

- **BALTIC GERMANS** (150,000 displaced by Hitler & Stalin; 95%+)
- **GERMANS OF YUGOSLAVIA** (over 200,000 expelled, imprisoned, displaced, emigrated; 98.5% total)
- **VOLGA GERMANS** (over 400,000 expelled by Soviets to Kazakhstan)
- **DUTCH GERMANS** (3,691 expelled, 15% of German population)
- **GERMANS OF ALSACE-LORRAINE** (100-200,000 expelled after WWI)
- **GERMANS OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA** (over 3,000,000 expelled and displaced; 95% total)
- **GERMANS OF HUNGARY** (over 100,000 expelled, over 300,000 displaced; 88% of total)
- **GERMANS OF ROMANIA** (over 700,000 or 91.5% displaced by Hitler, USSR, & emigration)
- **US Internment of German-Americans, Japanese, & Italians** (10,906+ interned & blacklisted) NEW!
- **GERMANS OF POLAND, PRUSSIA** (over 5,000,000 expelled and displaced, nearly 100%) COMING SOON
- **GERMANS OF RUSSIA/UKRAINE** (nearly 1,000,000 to Germany and Kazakhstan) COMING SOON

OTHER INFORMATION

Search IREG Thorough

- **OUR YOUTUBE CHANNEL** NEW! (documentaries, interviews, speeches)
- **Follow us on FACEBOOK** NEW! (for updates, events, announcements)
- **"Reactions of the British Public and Press to the Expulsions"** NEW!
- **"British Humanitarian Responses - or lack thereof - to German Refugees"** NEW!
- **"British Political Responses to the German Refugee Crisis during Occupation"** NEW!
- **From Poland, to Czechoslovakia, to Occupied Germany: Life in Upper Silesia and Flight to the West** (a reader's analysis of his father's memories of fear and removal) NEW!
- **From Poland, to Czechoslovakia, to Occupied Germany: My Flight from the Red Army to the West** (memoir about wartime flight & Jewish, Polish, & German daily life near Auschwitz) NEW!
- **Daily Diary of Forced Labor in the Mines of Soviet Ukraine** NEW!
- The problem of classifying German expellees as a 'genocide'
- Why the German, Czech, and Polish governments reject expellee commemoration

THE HISTORY AND REMOVAL OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S GERMANS THROUGH EXPULSION AND DISCRIMINATORY LAWS

follow us on facebook FOLLOW US ON YOUTUBE

Print this Article • Font Size: - + • Send this Article to a Friend

HOW TO CITE THIS SCHOLARLY ESSAY: Institute for Research of Expelled Germans. "The history and removal of Czechoslovakia's Germans through expulsion and discriminatory laws." http://expelledgermans.org/sudetengermans.htm (accessed Day-Month-Year).

The former flag of the Sudeten Germans. In 1938, Konrad Henlein and Adolf Hitler forced the surrender of the region to Germany before illegally occupying the whole nation of Czechoslovakia.

Included German minourity groups in this region: Sudeten Germans, Carpathian Germans, Zipser Germans

Total population change resulting from expulsion and displacement: from ~3,295,000 to only 159,938, 95% loss

- History of Settlement and Culture
- History of Expulsion
- Sources/Bibliography
- Population Statistics
- Famous Persons
- Suggested Websites and Organisations

History of Settlement, Culture, and the Nazi-Czech Conflict

Ethnic Germans have settled in the territories of Bohemia and Moravia (comprising the modern Czech Republic) for over 1,000 years. The Czech Bohemian kingdom, long one of the oldest and most significant political forces in Central European history and diplomacy, almost cyclically alternated between phases of independence and subservience to the rule of the German Empire. Although Bohemia was ceremonially a part of the German Holy Roman Empire for nearly a millennium, the Czechs often operated with great autonomy or even independence, frequently inheriting Hungary and Poland. As a result of this close affilation with Germany, ethnic German minorities consistently settled in the urban centres of central Bohemia and rural lands on the German-Bohemian border, and rapidly formed the elite ethnic caste over a vastly Slavic Czech majority. This German minority contributed significantly to the architecture, political foundations, and Catholic church structure. Under the German Emperor Karl IV, they established a new Habsburg capital in Prague in the 14th century that quickly became one of the most majestic cultural centres of Europe. This legacy remains visible today.

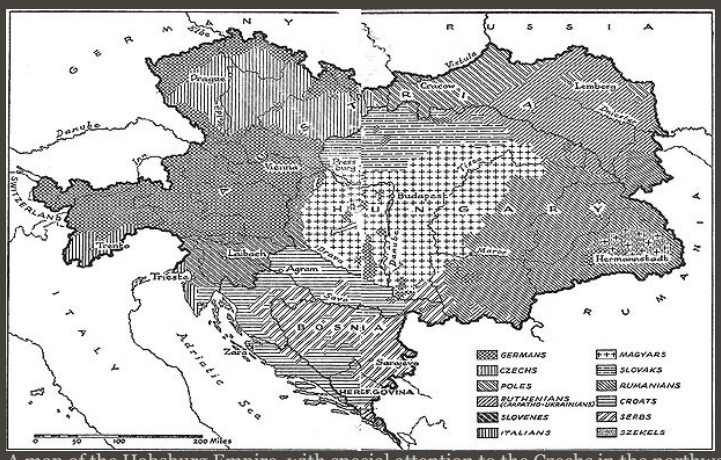
By the 16th century, the Bohemian monarchy had inherited Hungary and Croatia. After 1526, having been obliterated by the Muslim Turks at the Battle of Mohacs, the German Habsburgs in Austria annexed the entire region. The Czechs thus became a province of the German-dominated Habsburg Empire (or Austria-Hungary) for over 400 years until 1918. The ethnic German minority in Bohemia operated as a disproportionately powerful and wealthy ethnic caste that consistently subsumed Czech desires for autonomy and freedom, leading to enduring inter-ethnic contumacy.

It was primarily during the Habsburg era that large numbers of ethnic Germans settled on the peripheral countryside of Bohemia near the Sudeten and Erz mountain ranges of the modern Czech-German border, hence they became gradually known as **Sudeten Germans** (Sudetendeutsche). With renewed ethnic German domination of Bohemia, the German minority in the region moved to German-speaking areas in Austria and the border of Germany (*Kant 1974, 533*). Large numbers of immigrant farmers from Bavaria and Saxony moved across the border into Habsburg Bohemia and what became known as the German-speaking Sudetenland. Due to the strong manifestation of Catholicism in southern Germany and the compulsory religious doctrine of the Austrian Habsburgs, these Sudeten Germans remained firmly Catholic. Bringing their southern German dialects and culture with them, the Sudeten Germans slowly evolved to become their own isolated and homogeneous mountain community in an otherwise Slavic-majority nation. Sudeten Germans focused heavily on agriculture, mining, and forestry until industrialisation in the 19th century turned the Sudetenland into a significantly mechanised landscape of large factories, mines, and mills.

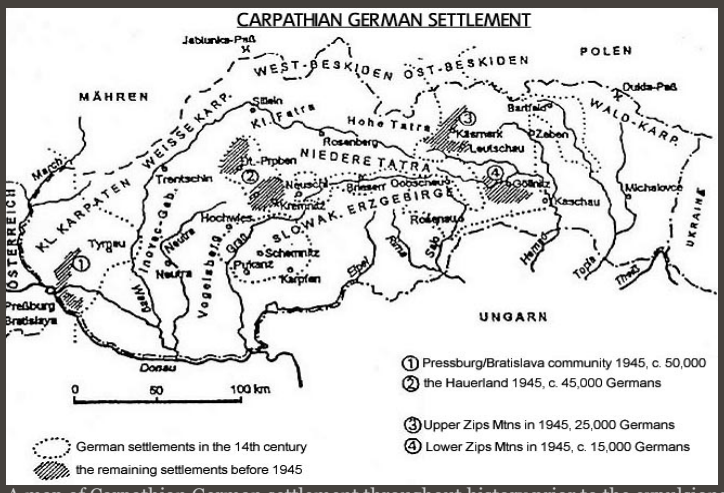
The Germans of Slovakia derive from a different historical heritage. The Slovaks, closely related to the Slavic Czechs, were firmly under the rule of the Kingdom of Hungary for nearly 1,000 years, a conflict that endures even today. The Hungarian kings, also closely affiliated with the German Empire, invited ethnic German farmers and entrepreneurs to settle in Hungary after the 14th century. Gradually, thousands moved to the isolated Carpathian and Zips mountain ranges in Hungarian Slovakia, where they were granted significant cultural and political autonomy as a minority under the Slovak majority. The 'Fredom of Zips' gave this community almost sub-national autonomy as a small confederacy after 1370 until 1876. These German settlers became known as **Carpathian Germans** (Karpatendeutsche). The rural farming communities in Slovakia retained the German language, Germanic culture, and a separate identity. The Carpathian Germans also settled in urban centres, where they contributed tremendously to the economic, architectural, artistic, and political foundations of the future Slovak nation. Pressburg (now the capital of Bratislava) became one of the major cultural centres in Central Europe, and was 74.6% German (with 31,509) even as late as 1850, although thereafter this dropped progressively (*Carpathian German Homepage*). After 1526, the Carpathian Germans and Slovaks joined the Sudeten Germans and Hungary as part of the German Habsburg Empire until 1918. The Carpathian Germans

- Distorted historical memory and ethnic nationalism as a cause for forgetting expellees
- Ethnic bias and nationalist revisionism among scholars as a cause for forgetting expellees
- The History and Failure of Expellee Politics and Commemoration NEW!
- Expellee scholarship on the occupations of Czechoslovakia and the Sudetenland, 1918-1945
- Sexual Violence and Gender in Expellee Scholarship and Narratives
- Comparative Genocide Table
- Suggested Resources & Organisations
- The Staff/Contact Us
- In Memoriam: Your Expellee Relatives & Survivors
- Submit content and information
- How to support German expellees / expellee political lobbies
- Bookmark IREG to Favourites!
- Donate to the Institute
- Affiliates/Partners
- Link to Us/Refer a friend
- Sitemap
- Privacy Policy/Copyright

kept their distinct language and culture in the lands of the Hungarian Crown. They remained firmly Catholic as a result of the ideological dictate of Hungary and the Habsburgs. However, a small minority of Carpathian Germans converted to Lutheranism and Calvinism along with the many Hungarians after the Reformation. For example, the Spiš community of Carpathian Germans became Protestant, whilst those in Bratislava and the Zips mountains remained Catholic. The Germans remained quite autonomous until the 1848 Hungarian Revolution for greater equality with the elite German ethnic caste. Subsequent Hungarian nationalism led to vast 'Magyarisation' programmes that quickly reduced the dominance of the Carpathian Germans in Slovakia.



A map of the Habsburg Empire, with special attention to the Czechs in the northwest. Notice the outer German minority around Czechoslovakia. This is the Sudetenland. (scanned from *Kann*). **CLICK MAP FOR ENLARGEMENT**



A map of Carpathian German settlement throughout history prior to the expulsions (translated and sharpened; originally from http://www.kdv.sk/kn.html) **CLICK MAP FOR ENLARGEMENT**

With the end of World War I, the Habsburg Empire collapsed in 1918. From its ashes, the empire's many ethnic minorities seized the opportunity to establish independent nations. The Czechs and Slovaks united to form Czechoslovakia, now with a significant Sudeten German and a smaller Carpathian German minority. Germans comprised some 22.9% of the national population, nearly 1/3 (*Radio Praha #2*). The very nationalistic Czechoslovaks quickly worked to reverse some 500 years of ethnic German minority domination of the Slavic majority. The Sudeten Germans quickly responded by rallying for either significant autonomy, independence, or merger with Germany or Austria. A number of German minority political parties and nationalist circles formed, including the socialists, communist, and the Sudeten Nazis. In 1919, large demonstrations and general work strikes were organised by the Sudeten German Social Democrat Party. The Czechoslovak military, understandably fearing internal revolt and the breakdown of one of Czechoslovakia's most important industrial regions, responded harshly. 54 Sudeten Germans were killed (*Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*). The crackdowns, which the Germans perceived as 'oppression', foreshadowed enduring inter-ethnic conflict that only worsened.

The Czechoslovak government, faced with economic torpidity and the continued legacy of abnormally wealthy German and Czech noble estates, initated a programme of partial land and property redistribution. This additionally sought to endow the Slavic majority with economic stability in their own country. The Sudeten Germans, living in one of the nation's most industrialized centres of employment, were hit disproportionately hard. Ethnic Germans at 22.9% got only 4.5% of the redistributed land, and even lost as many as 600,000 hectares (*Cornwall 1997, 264*). Further, economic hardship during the Great Depression meant that the Sudeten Germans working in factories suffered large unemployment. So too, the fact that the Sudeten Germans lived on a border with a famously belligerent nation meant that the Czechoslovak military and government had to forcibly annex land from ethnic German families to built a massive border fortification system. Although Germans interpreted this as a Slavic effort to aggregate wealth and power to themselves at the expense of the German minority, this is exaggerated. The Czechoslovak government did give Germans government support and social programmes, redistributed land, and compensation for annexed property and resources. As mentioned above, the Sudeten Germans were inevitably to be effected by the poor economy (that disastrously affected the Czechs and Slovaks as well) because they lived in a crucial industrial region that depended upon indolent production and export markets. Although Hitler was quick to describe a systematic Slavic persecution of the Germans, this was exaggerated and oversimplified.

Nonetheless, the Sudeten and Carpathian Germans perceived a disproportionate oppression and denial of franchise to the large German minority. Most argued that the Sudetenland, with its overwhelming ethnic German majority and greatly distinct culture and economic potential, should manage its own political affairs autonomously. Consistently, the government of Edvard Beneš refused any notion of autonomy for the Sudeten Germans due to the crippling effect it would have to give over 28% of the country autonomy and control over one of the most important industrial centres. The Sudeten Germans responded by increasing political radicalisation. The concomitant ascension of the pan-Germanic Adolf Hitler in Germany in 1933, with his rhetoric of uniting all Germans across Europe against the perfidy and 'oppression' of the Slavs, greatly gravitated the Sudeten Germans towards racialist and far-right nationalism. Quickly, the vast majority of Sudeten Germans called for almost complete autonomy or even independence from Czechoslovakia and possible merger into the Third Reich. The

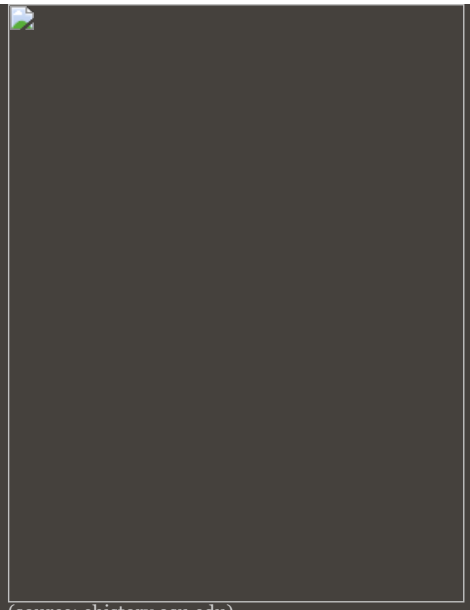
leading vanguard of the pan-Germanist movement was the Sudeten German Party (or Sudeten Nazi Party) of **Konrad Henlein**. The analogue Carpathian German Party also formed, but was unable to achieve much support due to the small size of the German minority in Slovakia. Due to the large size of the German minority in the nation and the multitude of rivaling Czechoslovak parties, the Nazi Party rapidly became the second-largest party in the whole country. Over 1,256,010 persons voted for Henlein's nationalists (*Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*). Although Czechs today repeatedly use the Sudeten Germans' overwhelming support for the Nazis as a justification for the expulsion of more than 3,000,000 civilians, it must be remembered that Konrad Henlein consistently rallied for increased autonomy *within* Czechoslovakia. So too, the Sudeten Germans voted for the nationalists because of their focus on local German interests against supposed Czechoslovak economic disenfranchisement. Most had no idea of any ulteriour plans for mass murder, genocide of Jews, illegal occupation of Prague, or the murder of thousands of Czech civilians.

Konrad Henlein met with Adolf Hitler numerous times, and was encouraged by Hitler to make ever-increasing demands of autonomy and recognition to Czechoslovak president Beneš. The secret intrusion of radical Nazi and Freikorps militias across the border into the Sudetenland, combined with the growing independence movement, caused the Czechoslovak government to respond with increasing military crackdowns that exacerbated the situation. There was bloody inter-ethnic violence between German and Czech civilians, as well as attacks by the Czechoslovak army. Mutual attacks in Sudeten German towns left hundreds wounded and dozens dead, especially in Teplitz (*Weitz 1992, 165*). The logical attempt by the government to stop internal revolt unfortunately exacerbated the German perception of Slavic oppression of Germans. Konrad Henlein's 8-point plan for ethnic German autonomy was rejected by Edvard Beneš. Shortly before Hitler's annexation of the region, the president tacitly suggested a partial autonomy like the ethnic regions of consociational Switzerland, but it was far too late. The Czechoslovaks had also initialised a large military buildup on the border of Germany due to false reports of German military troops massing at the border. As a result even more Slavic soldiers were marching with guns in the Sudetenland, worsening the situation. In reality, there were no German tank buildups on the border, and in fact German engineer tests had determined that the magnificent Czechoslovak border fortifications were so impervious that they could only be taken with disastrous costs to the German military (*Speer 1970, 132-3*). The hysteria of the situation understandably stymied Czechoslovak hopes for a stable and sovereign nation ruling the Sudetenland.

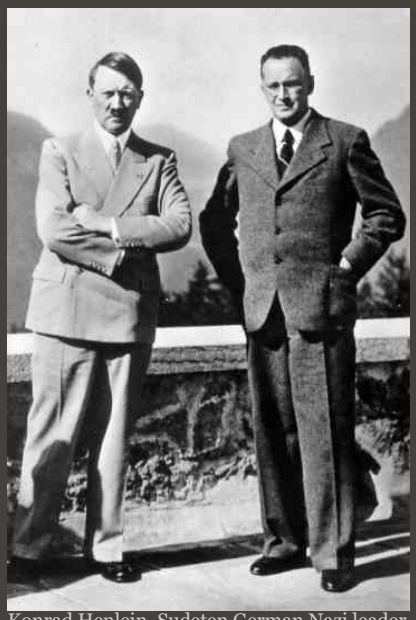
By Septembre of 1938, Hitler saw a chance to appeal to the rampant autonomy sentiment of the Sudeten Germans and incorporate them into the Reich.. With the support of Konrad Henlein, at the **Munich Conference** of 30 Septembre, 1938, Adolf Hitler met with Benito Mussolini, Edouard Daladier, and Neville Chamberlain to demand that the Czechoslovak government cede the Sudetenland to be joined with the Third Reich. The Czechoslovaks were not even represented at the meeting. By the end of the night, almost 3,295,000 incredibly-nationalistic Sudeten and Carpathian Germans were now part of Germany. Nationalist Poland also seized southern Silesia from Czechoslovakia, and therefore ruled nearly 10,000 ethnic German Silesians until Poland was conquered by the Germans (*Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft*). Fascist Hungary, a close ally of the Third Reich, incorporated eastern Slovakia with its large Hungarian population. The Sudeten Germans became citizens of Germany, and were elevated to the dominant ethnic caste of the occupied Czech nation. In complete violation of the Munich Conference, Hitler proceeded to simply occupy the entire country, throwing Beneš into exile and annexing all of Czechoslovakia by March of 1939 (before World War II). All but 8% of the most important industrial areas were incorporated into the Reich (*Burleigh 2001, 409*). The Czechs were now under the rule of the Reich Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, soon led by the terror of SS-Gestapo Head **Reinhard Heydrich**. The Allied powers ignored the plight of the Czechoslovaks. The Sudeten Germans greeted Hitler with roaring applause and parades. The Czechs today justify their expulsion of the entire German population by understandably citing the Sudeten Germans' vast support for Adolf Hitler, who inflicted disastrous suffering upon the Czech people. Significantly, nearly **all ethnic Czechs were expelled** from the Sudetenland region (only) after Germany's annexation in 1938. Czechs emphasise this as an additional justification for the expulsions, although they proceeded to expel millions of ethnic Germans from the entire country rather than a few thousand from one region.

(source: aktualne.centrum.cz)

(source: praha.eu)



(source: ehistory.osu.edu)



Konrad Henlein, Sudeten German Nazi leader, with Adolf Hitler (source: Deutsch Historisches Museum Berlin)

The division of Czechoslovakia and the Sudetenland. **(**source: *Oxford Atlas of World History)* **CLICK MAP FOR ENLARGEMENT**

Whilst the Czechs were under German occupation and the police state of Reinhard Heydrich, the **Carpathian Germans** in Slovakia saw a very different experience. The Germans appealed to active Slovakian and Catholic independence movements among Slovaks by establishing the pro-Nazi autonomous state of Slovakia under the Catholic priest Jozef Tiso. Until 1944, the Slovaks greatly contributed to the annihilation of the Jews largely outside of Heydrich's or Berlin's dictate. Tiso's Nazi government elevated the Carpathian Germans to significant autonomy status and political franchise. However, the Carpathian German minority in Slovakia was greatly agitated that Slovakia was not directly incorporated into the Reich, and that they only enjoyed autonomous minority status (*Lumans 1982, 280*). Carpathian Germans had hoped that Hitlerian pan-Germanist expansion would 'liberate' them from a perceived longstanding Slovak hegemony (*Lumans 1982, 271*). This completely ignored the centuries of prodigious ethnic German influence in Bratislava and Slovakia over the native Slovak majority. Due to auspicious labor settlement and Germanisation of Nazi Slovakia, the Carpathian German population increased from 135,408 to 147,501 by 1940 (*Carpathian German Homepage*).

Whilst the Slovak Fascists and the Carpathian Germans enjoyed a relatively close and unproblematic relationship with the Third Reich until the uprising of 1944, the Czech people were subject to brutal truculence under the

regime of SS-Gestapo chief Reinhard Heydrich. The Sudeten Germans who were not incorporated directly into Germany assumed dominant ethnic control over the Slavs. The infirm puppet president of the Czechs, Emil Hácha, yearned to preserve the autonomy and auspices of the Czech people by being openly subservient to the Germans, even giving Heydrich himself the ancient Bohemian crown of St. Weneslaus and a full hospital train for Germans, Romanians, and Hungarians fighting on the Eastern Front (*The Assassination of Reinhard Heydrich*). Some of the worst atrocities of the war were committed against the Czech people, including the imprisonment and execution of tens of thousands of Czechs in concentration and transit camps like Theresienstadt. Joseph Goebbels, the Propaganda Minister of the Reich, fancifully described Heydrich as the 'model leader' for the Czechs who consistently 'humbles' the Slavs to make the Czech nation proud (*Goebbels 1948, 35N*). Despite the regime of terror that is today remembered by Czechs as one of their darkest historical chapters, tens of thousands of Czechs were relegated to seek employment in German factories and offices in occupied Czechia, for which they received far greater pensions, wages, and food rations than in many cases during independence. The many conciliatory Czechs were superficially lionised in books charted by Heydrich as faithful Slavic workers, as in *The Boys in Blue* (*Burleigh 2001, 432*). The German minority in occupied Czechoslovakia enjoyed disproportionate political franchise over the Slavs.

In 1942, Reinhard Heydrich was assassinated by Czech nationalists who hid in the Serbian Orthodox Church of Prague before evading capture via suicide. The Germans responded with brutal reprisals, including the imprisonment and execution of thousands and the reduction of towns like Lidice and Ležáky to ash. Heydrich's successor, Karl Hermann Frank, ideally planned to imprison 10,000 Czechs in reprisal, but averted at the last minute due to employment considerations (*The Assassination of Reinhard Heydrich*).

Analysing the brutal legacy of German rule in occupied Czechoslovakia is significant, since Czechs strongly emphasise that the expulsion of more than 3,000,000 civilians was justified considering the atrocities committed by the Germans. However, the expulsions, as illustrated below, completely disregarded the political alignment of the ethnic German minority and simply targeted an entire ethnic community for removal solely because of its ethnicity. It is important to remember that the occupying German forces and killing squads in Czechoslovakia were primarily from Germany proper or were volunteers from occupied countries and Axis nations. The Sudeten Germans themselves were not responsible for the occupation or hardships of the Czech people. Although their call for independence ultimately led to the Munich Conference and the annexation of the Sudetenland, it was the political opportunism and expansionism of Hitler's Germany that caused Czechoslovakia's loss of sovereignty. It is grossly inaccurate to claim that after the annexation of the Sudetenland and the occupation of Prague, the Sudeten Germans turned the tides and unleashed a wave of terror and occupation on the Czechs from 1938-45. Instead, ethnic generalisations by the Czechoslovaks of the Germans as the inherent perpetrators of war and occupation falsely implicated the Sudeten Germans as responsible for Czech suffering because of their ethnic identity.

Reinhard Heydrich and one of the Sudeten German leaders Karl Hermann Frank (source: holocaustresearchproject.org)

The underground crypt where the assassins of Heydrich hid before their suicide (copyright expelledgermans.org)
CLICK FOR ENLARGEMENT

The plaque outside the church commemorated the assassins of Heydrich (copyright expelledgermans.org) **CLICK FOR ENLARGEMENT**

The hole in the crypt of the church were the assassins hid from the SS. They attempted to dig a hole to safety but had too little time, and committed suicide to evade capture (copyright expelledgermans.org) **CLICK FOR ENLARGEMENT**

History of Expulsion

By May of 1945, the Soviet Red Army had conquered Slovakia and the Czechs along with the Third Reich. One regime of denial of sovereignty, purges, executions, and political censorship had replaced another, as reunited Czechoslovakia was rapidly absorbed into the Communist orbit of the Warsaw Pact. Returning from exile, Czechoslovak president Edvard Beneš found a broken nation enraged with ethnic hatred for the Germans regardless of their political beliefs or their opinions on Nazism or anti-Slavic Nazi chauvinism. The culture, ethnicity, and even the sound of the German language disgusted many Czechs (*Wheeler*). More than 250,000 people in Czechoslovakia had died during the war due to execution, imprisonment, or in transit camps like Theresienstadt and abroad in Poland (*Burleigh 2001, 416*). 300,000 Czechs and Jews had been deported to concentration camps (*Wheeler*). In the understandable anti-German hysteria that followed, it was extolled within the Czechoslovak government that the 'nation survives only on its hope for revenge' (*Glassheim 2000, 471*). In a sweeping generalisation that falsely viewed all Germans as inherently belligerent, pro-Fascist, and anti-Czech, the Czechoslovaks planned to completely destroy the entire 1,000-year-old German minority community simply because of their ethnicity, effectively purging more than 28.8% of the national population in only a few years. President Beneš demand that, 'the German question in our republic must be liquidated', rallying that Czechs must 'wait patiently…to cleanse the republic' (*ibid*). The Czech government expedited the removal of the German civilians by asserting that 'the Czech nation also needs its **Lebensraum**' to be achieved by 'the departure or expulsion' of all Germans accused of collaboration with the invaders (*Glassheim 2000, 473-4*). Although he proceeded to insist that it was inappropriate to murder or execute the Germans en masse, and that anti-Fascists would not be affected, ultimately the near entirety of the German ethnicity would be removed and shipped to Allied-occupied Germany, including those who had absolutely no pro-Nazi sympathies and actively considered themselves citizens of Czechoslovakia. He argued that the punishment for 'treason' for which the Sudeten Germans were guilty – death – was far worse than expulsion, even though at least 15,000-30,000 civilians died during the expulsions.

Beneš, nationalists, and other proponents of the expulsion programme framed the removal of the German and Hungarian 'criminal' minourity under the context of purging the now-liberated Czechoslovak state of foreign, imperial influences that even went back to the crushing of Czech independence by the German Habsburgs at White Mountain in 1620 during the Thirty Years' War. He announced to the public, 'let our motto be: to definitely de-Germanise our homeland, culturally, economically, politically.' Other newspapers fueled the intense inter-ethnic hatred that resulted from centuries of cultural tension and the brutal German occupation by universally proscribing the Germans as a parasitic threat to the liberated Czechoslovak state. Newspapers like *Novo Slovo* wrote on 18 August, 1945, that 'the German possesses no soul, and the words that he understands best are – according to [influential nationalist] Jan Masaryk – the salvos of a machine gun.' Other outspoken politicians like the leader of the National Socialist Party said that the goal of all Czechs must be 'to clean out the republic as a whole and completely of Germans…every one of us must help in the cleansing of the homeland' (*Naimark 2001, 115*).

By the time of the expulsions in 1945, there were 3,295,000 total German civilians in Czechoslovakia (*Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft*). Included in this statistic were 147,501 Carpathian Germans in Slovakia (*Carpathian German Homepage*). Only a few months after the fall of the Third Reich in May of 1945, the decision was finalised to expel all but 800,000 Germans (*Burleigh 2001, 799*). The remaining Germans were to be used as labor (primarily voluntary) to fuel the reconstruction effort. Tens of thousands of ethnic Hungarians were also to be expelled simply because of their ethnicity's longstanding conflict with the Slovaks, and because their nation had been a close ally of the Third Reich. Those exempt from expulsion were disallowed from leaving in order to provide the war-torn Czechoslovak job market with employees. Ultimately, the majority of the exempt 800,000 were eventually expelled or displaced with the other more than 2,000,000 as well. To expedite the expulsion of the German minority, President Beneš had codified the so-called **Beneš Decrees**, legal parametres in Czechoslovakia that would allow soldiers and private citizens to expel German citizens, confiscate all their property without compensation, and even employ physical violence when necessary without legal or criminal prosecution. These laws are still present in the Czech Republic today, although they are not at all enforced. Although the Czech government and Czech nationalists today insist that the expulsions and any subsequent deaths were merely a retribution for Germany's brutal truculence in occupied Czechoslovakia against a highly pro-Nazi population, and cannot be compared with Nazi atrocities, the Czech expulsions purged ethnic German civilians even with far-left and socialist beliefs solely because of their cultural affiliation. The British government encouraged the Czechoslovaks to disregard the diverse political beliefs of the Germans and expel them all because a radical solution was required to alleviate the perceived pervasive German belligerence (*Burleigh 2001, 799*). Anti-Fascists who committed no treason were to be expelled too.

From 1945 to 1950, the expulsion campaign under military and government direction dropped the ethnic German population in Czechoslovakia from **3,295,000 (28.8% of the nation) to only 159,900 (1.8%)** (*Eberhardt 2003, 150*). This is a total of a 95% loss of Czechoslovakia's German minority. The Carpathian German community in Slovakia dropped from 147,501 to 5,200, only 0.1% by 1950. More than 1.3 million civilians were shipped to the American occupied zone in Germany in the initial phase, and 800,000 to the Soviet zone, where the latter faced extremely inclement purging and expulsion like the Volga Germans and Prussian Germans (*Radio Praha #2*). Over 500,000 ethnic Germans were expelled from the Czech portion of Silesia on the Polish border alone, and were marched to the German border in Saxony at gunpoint (*ibid, 148*). The Sudetenland, a German community for over 500 years, was completely depopulated and replaced by Czech and Slovak families. In February of 1945 (before the war's end), there were 868,000 Czechs and Slovaks in the border area. By Decembre of the same year (after the war), there were over 1,731,000 million Slavs, and by May of 1947 there were 2,230,000 – from 80% German before the war to 90% Slavic after the expulsions (*ibid, 150*). About 2 1/2 million Czechs settled in areas that were forcibly depopulated of German families (*Radio Praha #3*).

(article continues below)

(source: Der Spiegel)

(source: Radio Praha)

Sudeten Germans were attacked and painted with Swastikas on their backs for perceived inherent Nazi connotations (source: Der Spiegel)

(source: http://incentraleurope.radio.cz)

(source: from Radio Praha)

Czechoslovak volunteers and soldiers carried out the expulsion by removing them from homes and either transporting them by trains and trucks to internment camps or by force-marching them to the border of Allied-occupied Germany at gunpoint. Large numbers died due to starvation, disease, and poor sanitation. Expelled Germans were often ordered to wear white armbands, often labeled with the letter 'n' ('Nemec', or German) to exclude them as criminal subversives (*Naimark 2001, 117*). Over 700,000 refugees were displaced in the initial expulsion plan, and the remainder of the more than 3,000,000 were removed through further expulsion and relegated departure. Most expellees were immediately dropped off at the West German border in Saxony and Bavaria, but tens of thousands languished for years in internment camps like Pohorelice and Novaky for interrogation and circulation before being deported. In a stroke of ironically, many were even interrogated and interned at Theresienstadt, one of the largest transit camps used by the Nazis for the genocide of the Jews and the murder of thousands of Czechs from 1938-45. Many foreign observers and primary accounts document stories of Czech police looking the other way as guards physically and sexually abused German women in forced labour camps. Many often called German women 'Nazi whores' and 'pigs'. One account describes the sexual and physical abuse against German civilians as almost unspeakable, writing that 'every time of the day we women were raped and our shirts torn from our bodies.' Many could not endure the labour or the rapes, and committed suicide (*Naimark 2001, 119*).

Indeed, a number of atrocities occurred during the expulsion. However, nationalist or biased sources tend to greatly exaggerate them, and Czechs insist that their actions either could have been far worse, were more humane than mass execution, or hardly compared to the suffering the Germans inflicted on the Czech people. Although each of these is arguably true, the Czechoslovak government directly pursued the complete destruction of an entire community with diverse political beliefs on ethnic grounds in one of the largest forced refugee movements of the 20th century. Recent research by Czech historians into this controversial topic has revealed that the Czech expulsions displaced large numbers of anti-Fascist, anti-Nazi, and even pro-Czech families. When Hitler annexed the Sudetenland in 1938, the German government imprisoned, executed, or expelled thousands of liberal and

reactionary politicians and citizens. Many of the remaining anti-Fascist families, including those who returned after Hitler's fall to their homelands, were also expelled by the Czechoslovaks. A number of anti-Fascist Sudeten German militias, such as the Guards of the [Czechoslovak] Republic, proudly extolled their membership in the Czechoslovak nation with the ulteriour goal of inclusive autonomy. Although the government recognised the most famous anti-Fascist resistance personalities, the few anti-Nazi Sudeten Germans who were not expelled were given only partial civil rights and treated as potentially dangerous second-class citizens. They were not allowed to work in government offices or public administration, write in newspapers, or organise any associations. They could not use public transportation because of the perceived universal danger associated with their ethnicity. They were denied retirement pensions and in many cases their savings were annexed by the state (*aktualne.cz*). Less than 200,000 'anti-Fascist certificates' were planned altogether for exemptions, but in most cases, many of the few acknowledged anti-Fascist Sudeten Germans were eventually expelled with the rest of the 3,000,000. They were allowed to carry 120 kg of their property with them instead of the 50 kg (at most) afforded to the other expellees; the rest of their property that many families owned for centuries was forfeited to the state (*ibid*).

Although the vast majority of the more than 3,000,000 German civilians expelled survived, there were numerous cases of death and flagrant ethnic violence that were later greatly excoriated by the Czechoslovak government as excessive. Although many Czechoslovak commanders and officers employed massacre tactics, there was no directly intentional effort by the Czechoslovak government to murder expelled Germans. Nonetheless, many liberal estimates, including those of the West German government, cite as many as 250,000 Sudeten Germans dead as a result of starvation, ethnic cleansing, exhaustion on forced marches, and disease (*SBD 1958*). Other pundits even place it as high as 270,000 (*Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft*). Almost certainly, this is inaccurate. The Czechs argue a far lower number. Exorbitant estimates are either highly biased, lacking in precise research, or in many cases include those who died of natural causes. Some who died were even bilingual Czechs who spoke German, and were not ethnic Sudeten Germans. Recent joint Czech-German research scholarship has determined a range of at least **15-30,000 confirmed dead German civilians** as a direct result of the Czech expulsion, exersion, starvation, and physical violence in internment camps, not including those who died of natural causes, infirmity, or disease. At least 6,000 were shot, executed, or beaten to death (*Overmans 1994, 2*) (*Glassheim 2000, 463*). The number of 15-30,000 is predictably eschewed by most German scholars and expellee interest groups, at the same time as the Czechs' attempt to downplay the full scope of the atrocities. The actual number of expellees killed will likely never be certain, as both factions are equally rife with exaggeration and cultural-historical bias.

One case, that of Josef Benesch, stands out as particularly representative of the experience of many German prisoners in Czech prison camps that often failed to distinguish between pro-German irredentist, traitors to the nation, and victims of random retributive violence. It should be noted that Benesch was an ethnic Czech (a Germanisation of Beneš) who intermarried with a ethnic German, and was considered a traitor (courtesy David Benes):

"My father, Josef Benes was a political prisoner at Bory Prison in Plzen, Czechoslovakia during 1948 to 1951 when he was fortunate to escape. He was at the time a 28 year old Czech Partisan who fought the Nazis only to see his country turned over to the Communists as a result of the Potsdam/Yalta agreements. They knew he was a anti-communist and was caught and imprisoned. He endured numerous beatings. The guards one day asked the prisoners if "anyone here was a baker." My father raised his hand as he actually was learning the trade at his fathers bakery in Plzen. Such skills were in need at Bory and he was given certain privileges that kept him from being executed. After a few months of baking for the prison staff along with helping to bury those who were either executed or died from malnutrition, a request from the guards to the inmates this time asked if "anyone here was a barber." Wanting to continue to live he raised his hand again. One of the guards noted that he said he was a baker previously, and said "now you claim to be a barber too!" The prison guard ordered him to cut another prisoners hair and stated to my father that "if I determine you cannot give this man a good haircut I will shoot you." He never cut a man's hair in his life. Since his life was now dependent on his ability to cut this prisoners hair he did the best he could. The guard did not kill him being satisfied with his new founded skill. This gave him some more privileges which gained him more access to working outside. On Mother's Day, when no guards happened to be watching him he made a run for it. By the time they noticed him missing he was about 100 yards away running as fast as he could. They saw him running and started shooting at him. Being springtime the fields behind the prison were wet and muddy. He told me the shots were so close to him that mud from the missed bullets sprayed him. Not knowing which direction to run and find freedom he looked to the sky and told me he saw a cloud in the shape of his mothers face. He ran in that direction and came upon the U.S. Army Zone. The soldiers saw what was happening and returned fire towards the guards chasing him until he was in their protection and safety."

Although it is today generally agreed that the Beneš government punished several ethnic cleansings or murders by Czechoslovak soldiers or civilians (despite the Beneš Decrees that made impromptu expulsions and even violence almost unpunishable), the intense inter-ethnic hatred that resulted from centuries of cultural antipathy and the brutality of the Nazi occupation could not restrain violence performed by individuals and soldiers against German civilians. Soviet observers even reported to the Central Committee in Moscow that the Czechs "don't kill them, but torment them like livestock. The Czechs look at them like cattle" (*Murashko and Noskova 1995, 235-7*). Czechoslovak military officers organised mass killings of German civilians. Vojtěch Černý, Karol Ctibor Pazura, and Bedřich Pokorný ordered soldiers and militias to force ethnic Germans on death marches, and even to dig their own mass graves before being shot by firing squads without being prompted by resistance (*Radio Praha #2*). Sudeten Germans as young as 12 and 15 who were accused of escaping from internment camps were hanged or shot. Over 750 civilians were executed at Postoloprty after preparing their own graves (*Radio Praha #1*). Many civilians and soldiers attacked or killed German civilians at random, in some cases even stringing them by their heels onto trees and dousing them with gasoline before burning them to death (*AHI*). One of the worst atrocities of the expulsion was the so-called Brno March (called the '**Brünn death march**' by Germans). The large German minority around the Moravian capital of Brno was escorted out of their homes with only an hour to prepare whatever they could carry before being marched over 50km to the border of Austria. Over 20,000 civilian families were marched by soldiers with almost no water, food, or medicine. Many were relegated to defecate or urinate whilst they walked because they could not leave the line. Those who dissented were disciplined with rifle butts and even whips. Bodies of the dead and infirm reportedly lay on the sides of the road (*BBC Jolyon*). Over 800 people died due to starvation, exersion, or dehydration (*Beneš 2002, 209*). Other scholars cite 1,700 dead in the Czech prison camps and at Brno (*Glassheim 2000, 470*). Many German nationalists exaggerate this dead and claim as many as 20,000, but this has thus far been disproven. Many Czechs respond to the 'death march' by saying that the number dead primarily consisted of the old and infirm, and was a result of the lack of food that equally affected the Czechs themselves. Another atrocity during the expulsions was the so-called **Usti Massacre** in August 1945, in which Sudeten German civilians were forced to wear white armbands and were marched to a bridge by the Elbe river. Soldiers lined several families up against the edge and hurled them over the side after they were all shot, including according to some sources an infant. Other inter-ethnic violence against Sudeten German civilians occurred across the country. Some first-hand sources cite unarmed Germans being shot in groups of 30 or 40 at a time before being interred in mass graves, as corroborated with the reputable BBC (*Wheeler*).

The Carpathian Germans in the Slovak region of Czechoslovakia suffered as well, dropping from 147,501 to only 5,200. The expulsion of Germans in Slovakia was comparatively gentler. Nonetheless, Slovaks emphasised that more than 5,400 local Carpathian Germans had joined the SS, an unusually high number for a small civilian population, meaning that expulsions were justified. At the same time, the Slovaks tend to dismiss Slovakia's large support for far-right Fascism and the Third Reich before 1944. Ironically, Heinrich Himmler hoped to evacuate and expel all of the Carpathian Germans to escape the Soviets in 1945, but it was too late and it was the Czechoslovaks who completed the expulsion (*Lumans 1982, 290*). At least 4,000 German civilians in Slovakia were expelled to the east for foced labor, and by some estimates 13,000 of these died in transit, unreported by the Czech government today because they died under Soviet authority (*Zentrum gegen Vertreibung*). Slovaks also settled along with the Czechs in formerly-German depopulated areas. 60,257 moved to Bohemia. At least 40,000 Hungarians were expelled from Slovakia to Hungary, targeted under the Beneš Decrees along with the German minority as second-class citizens because of generalised stereotypes associated with their ethnicities (*Migration Citizenship Education*). In some cases, Carpathian Germans were targeted by rogue Czechoslovak soldiers. Karol Ctibor Pazura ordered the execution of nearly 300 unarmed German prisoners who dug their own graves, the youngest victim being seven months old (*Carpathian German Homepage*). Most Carpathian Germans fled to

Germany, were captured by the Red Army, or were expelled along with the Sudeten Germans by the Czechoslovak government.

The occurrences of suicide were so widespread as a result of the Czechoslovak expulsion programme that many observers of the Red Army reported daily discoveries of entire families dressed in their Sunday's finest before performing suicide together. General Sirov, who helped orchestrate the expulsions, wrote his report to NKVD head Lavrentij Beria that some 5,000 German civilians, mostly elderly and children, 'with their futures ruined and having no hope for anything better...ended their lives by suicide, cutting their wrists,' with 71 Germans found on 8 June alone (*Naimark 2001, 117*). Czech sources report some 5,558 suicides among ethnic Germans in 1946 alone (*Kucera 1992, 24*).

By the end of the expulsion campaigns, the Sudeten German community had been destroyed. As the popular nationalist Jan Masaryk, son of the great founding president of Czechoslovakia Tomáš Masaryk, positively noted, the nation was lastly 'finished with the Germans of Czechoslovakia...There is no possible way to get us to live under the same umbrella again' (*Naimark 2001, 122*). Of 3,149,800 Germans in Czechoslovakia (28.8%), only 159,938 remained (1.8%). At least 700,000 had been forcibly expelled in the initial expulsion phase in forced marches, with the remainder fleeing and being subsequently expelled by 1950. The Carpathian German community almost disappeared, falling from 135,408 (7%) to 5,200 (0.1%). Simply because of stereotypical associations with a dictator who inflicted flagrant suffering on the Czech people, an entire ethnic group was targeted for removal in one of the largest forced refugee communities of the 20th century, including most anti-Fascists. Today, there are approximately 39,106 Germans and 14,672 Hungarians in the independent Czech Republic (0.4%), and 5,405 Carpathian Germans in Slovakia (*Eberhardt 2003, 150-155*) (*Štatistický úrad SRN*). A huge number of the few remaining Germans left Communist Czechoslovakia for wealthier West Germany from 1950-1990 due to economic and political reasons.

Today, the issue of the Czechoslovak expulsion of Hungarians and Germans remains a tremendously tense political and cultural conflict in Germany, Austria, and the divided Czech Republic and Slovakia. Slovakia, which expelled a far less dramatic population than 3,000,000 like the Czechs did, has been able to blame the Czech regime or the Red Army. The Slovak Republic has formally apologised for the expulsions, although it has refused to offer any financial restitution or compensation. There are a number of Carpathian German representative groups and newspapers that have even been acknowledged by government and city officials, such as the Support Committee of Evangelical Lutheran German Slovakians, the Support Federation for Carpathian German Catholics, the Carpathian German Association, and the Karpatenblatt newspaper. However, the Hungarian minority claims to suffer continously intense discrimination as part of a 1,000-year-old ethnic tension. Very little commemoration has been afforded to their experience with Slovak expulsion. At least officially, the Hungarian language and all other minority languages are partly criminalised in government and political circles, punishable by up to a €5000 fine (*Economist*). Hungarian nationalists like the powerful far-right Jobbik Party in Hungary irascibly accuse the Slovak government of demoting the hated Hungarian minority to second-class status. Even Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban described the expulsion of Hungarian civilians as 'another shameful event in the 20th century where Hungarians were on the painful, losing side.' The Slovak government insists that they are merely trying to streamline administration and assimilate the Hungarians. Nonetheless, their story of expulsion by Czechoslovakia is arguably less commemorated than the Germans.

There are a number of international and local expellee interest groups emanating from diaspora communities, particularly in Germany, Canada, and the United States. These organisations actively emphasize the history of expulsions in their frequent assemblies and cultural gatherings at universities, college campuses, local clubs, and in newspapers. In February of 2010, hundreds of scholars, survivors, researchers, donators, human rights representatives, and even diplomats and figures from the United Nations gathered for the first international assembly commemorating the expulsion of Germans at the Community College of Meramec in St. Louis, Missouri. Called "The Forgotten Genocide," the two-day conference included a large art gallery, press interviews, roundtable academic discussions, survivors' recollections, and dozens of speakers from diverse fields and motivations. Several speakers and survivors, particularly Rudolf Püschel, reflected on the removal of the German minourity from Czechoslovakia and discussed the lack of commemoration today (see speech video below). The Institute for Research of Expelled Germans was also represented, delivering a speech on the destroyed Volga German community. The unique event even caught the attention of newspapers and forums in Poland and Germany, with both critical and positive commentary.

(article continues below)

Historian and survivor Rudolf Püschel speaks at an academic conference on the Sudeten Germans in St. Louis, Missouri (Click HERE to watch the remaining speech segments)

The art gallery of "The Forgotten Genocide" conference in St. Louis, Missouri, February 2010 **(CLICK TO ENLARGE)**

Another wall of "The Forgotten Genocide" conference **(CLICK TO ENLARGE)**

The issue of restitution, commemoration, and compensation for expelled Germans in the Czech Republic remains highly controversial and unresolvedl. Many German citizens and politicians have demanded that the Czech entry into the European Union be predecated on a Czech admission of guilt for the expulsions as a flagrant human rights violation, including Edmund Stoiber of the Bavarian Christian Social Union. Others argue that the Czech government must abolish the Beneš Decrees that granted immunity to Czech citizens expelling Germans and confiscating their property without compensation. Edmund Stoiber, the minister-president of Bavaria, argued that the Decrees (still legally in place but not enforced at all) are 'incompatible with the law, the spirit and the culture of Europe' (*Deutsche Welle*). There are annual Sudeten German rallies in Nuremberg that have even caused international political crises, particularly when Germany's finance minister in 1996 publicly condemned the Czech government for burying evidence of ethnic killings and expulsions reminiscent of the Yugoslav massacres of Bosniaks in Srebrenica. The controversy is fueled by cultural and ethnic nationalist sympathies. The late far-right nationalist in Austria, Jörg Haider, demanded that the Bene Decrees be repealed as an example of Czech atrocities against Germans. Czech nationalists respond with equal fervour of denunciation. Other contumacy has arisen between the Czech government and human rights organisations. Prominent human rights watchdogs like Alfred de Zayas and Felix Elmacora have argued that regardless of whether 'only' 20,000 were killed by the Czech expulsions (as the Czechs argue) or 250,000 (as the Germans argue), the intentional effort by the Czechoslovak government to destroy a community on ethnic grounds constitutes genocide (*Ryback 1996, 164*). Czech historians are newly supporting the plight of the vanquished German minority, including the Czech scholarly group Antikomplex. A number of Sudeten German expellee interest groups are subsidised and supported in Austria, Hessen, Saxony, and Bavaria, including the Sudeten German Association.

The Czech government has officially refused to denounce, commemorate, or acknowledge the expulsion, emphasising instead that commemorating the expellees' experience is only detrimental to propitious Czech-German diplomatic and cultural relations today. German Chancellor Gerhard Shröder and Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer have described the Sudeten German expellee issue as the biggest obstacle to Czech-German relations (*Kroeger*). The Czechs understandably argue that the Czech economy would be decimated if it were forced to compensate all the displaced expellees, and also point to the notion that the Germans have given far too little in compensation to the Czech people for Nazi atrocities. The Czechs have refused to repeal the Beneš Decrees, arguing that they are not enforced anyway and would open the Czech courts up to banktupting compensation claims. Only in a few cases have restitution petitions been acknowledged, such as the rare cases of Rudolph Dreithaler and the Walderobe family that received a small patch of confiscated land in 2008 after more than 40 years of controversial lawsuits. In 2009, as the Czech Republic began to question the revamped constitution of the European Union under Eurosceptic President Vaclav Klaus, the Czech government has openly expressed great concern over the future of the restitution question for displaced Germans and Hungarians. Klaus noted his concern that the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights would become a potential basis for a torrent of lawsuits by expelled German families against the Czech government that would have crippling diplomatic and fiscal consequences. He argued that the EU-wide charter should include an exemption for the Czech Beneš Decrees, which gave legal mandate to the confiscation of German property and orchestrated their removal (*Zachovalova, Time*). One recent poll cited that more than 16% of Czechs support Klaus' stance on the exemption for the expelled Germans, with as much as 2/3 of the Czech population described as being 'wary' of resettled Germans and the opening of old inter-cultural wounds (*Ibid.*).

Following the election of the new Czech president Miloš Zeman of the left-leaning Party of Civic Rights in 2013, the situation is no less volatile. While foreign minister Karel Schwarzenberg continues to take a more moderate and cooperative position regarding the Sudeten Germans, Zeman insisted that the expulsion was a somewhat generous punishment: "if some were citizens of a country and collaborated with a state that occupied their country, then the transfer is more moderate than, for instance, death penalty." While he rightly pointed out that some 90% of Sudeten Germans voted for the Henleinist party that sought annexation with Germany by 1938, he insisted that the Benes Decrees were a legal and just part of the Czech constitution (*Prague Daily Monitor*). Zeman has never failed to excite political controversy. Schwarzenberg suggested that Zeman tone down his rhetoric, while Czech prime minister Petr Nečas pointed out that incendiary rhetoric about the Sudeten Germans was an unnecessary obstacle to positive relations: "relations with Germany have been developing very positively, the relations with Austria are on a good level. It is meaningless, it has no sense and it is of no good to use unnecessarily strong statements."

Despite the official position, there are dissident voices in the Czech Republic that have denounced or otherwise recognised the expulsion, including former president Vaclav Havel, a leader of the multi-party movement in socialist Czechoslovakia (Charter 77) and the founder of the post-communist state after the Velvet Revolution of 1989. Havel repeatedly argued that Klaus' recalcitrant position was 'dangerous' for the Czech nation's relations to the European Union. Along with Havel, former foreign minister and 2013 presidential candidate Karl Schwarzenberg denounced Klaus' hardline position and described the Benes Decrees as contradictory to the human rights platform that has become associated with Europe. In 2013, he argued that: “the Beneš decrees have not been valid for 20 years. When the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Basic Freedoms was incorporated in the Czech Constitution, the decrees became invalid...What we committed in 1945 would today be considered a grave violation of human rights and the Czechoslovak government, along with president Beneš, would have found themselves in The Hague” (Richter, Cesky Rozhlas). Despite dissident voices, the Czech government, most Czech politicians, and most of Czech society continue to view the transfer of Germans as a necessary process of liberation from the yoke of German hegemony. As late as 2013, Klaus argued that the idea of Prague denouncing the Benes Decrees is "scornful of Czech history and as a Czech, I feel threatened by them" (Cesky Rozhlas). Czech presidential candidate Miloš Zeman reacted by arguing that Karl Schwarzenberg and other Czech politicians who denounce the Benes Decrees are ""speaking like a Sudeten German, not like a president" (Ibid.).

In 2013, following the resignation of Czech president Petr Nečas amid allegations of corruption in the government, the Sudeten German leader Berndt Posselt thanked Nečas with "respect for having built bridges to Sudeten Germans with courage and empathy to Necas." Posselt claimed that this was a "historic act that will not be forgotten." The Sudeten Germans took this gesture of good faith to the fullest proportions, arguing that ""the Czech side regrets that, by the forcible expulsion and forced resettlement of Sudeten Germans from the former Czechoslovakia after the war as well as by the expropriation and deprivation of citizenship, much suffering and injustice was inflicted upon innocent people, also in view of the fact that guilt was attributed collectively." In truth, while Nečas has made significant progress in the relationship between Sudeten Germans and Czechs, he, too, has often had to accomodate the Czech nationalist currents that pervade in Czech historical memory and in political life. (*Prague Monitor*).

In 2015, the leading Sudeten German organisation *Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft* made a surprising shift by revising their official language to avoid words like 'restitution' and 'compensation', words that have dominated expellee politics for over 50 years. These words are usually perceived as revanchist by the Czech, Polish, Russian, Serbian, and other governments that were involved in the expulsions (*Deutsche Welle, 2015*). This is a very significant about-face because expellee lobbies have always maintained political agendas that seem very contradictory to those accused governments. Most prominently, Sudeten German leaders have often been confused why their positive demands for human rights, integration, and cross-cultural dialogue have not been taken seriously by Prague. Here again, the *Landsmannschaft* insists that they will act as a "go-between in the German-Czech dialogue" and work to denounce all human atrocities carried out against Germans, Czechs, Jews, and Silesians alike. However, Czechs continue to dismiss Sudeten German lobbies as revisionist, revanchist, or simply disingenuous when they simultaneously demand very vague goals like the "return" of the homeland and demand compensation for Czech atrocities. It remains to be seen whether the new Sudeten German political agenda will be treated differently by Prague.

(for a deep analysis of how expellee politics and language have evolved since 1945, and why expellee objectives have failed, read our article here)

Ultimately, it is undeniable that the Nazis committed horrendous atrocities against the Czech people. However, it was not the Sudeten and Carpathian German farmers and factory workers who sentenced tens of thousands to their deaths in Heydrich's prisons or in concentration camps in Theresienstadt and Auschwitz. Although the Sudeten Germans showed overwhelming support for Hitler and incorportation into Germany in 1938 and ultimately contributed to a political crisis that destroyed Czechoslovak independence, Sudeten Germans developed a variety of political beliefs by 1945. Fascism, Communism, pro-Czech reconciliation, and socialism all were present as Sudeten Germans adapted to the impending fall of the Third Reich and the re-establishment of Czechoslovak sovereignty over the German minority. The eclectic political beliefs and degrees of guilt of the Sudeten Germans notwithstanding, the Czechoslovaks ultimately destroyed an entire ethnic community of more than 3,000,000 civilians – Nazis, racists, anti-Fascists, and socialists – simply because of its ethnicity, sending families that had been an integral part of the region for centuries into diaspora as one of the largest refugee communities of the century.

Sources/Bibliography

AHI, "Vertreibungsbericht von Frau Erna Pätzold," November 1945.

Aktualne.cz. "Research: many expelled Germans were anti-Fascist." http://aktualne.centrum.cz/czechnews/clanek.phtml?id=616889.

Beneš, Zdeněk. *Rozumět dějinám*. Prague: Gallery, 2002.

Bohmann, Alfred. "Das Sudetendeutschtum in Zahlen." Sudetendeutscher Rat in München, 1959.

Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. "Republik unter Druck." http://www.bpb.de/publikationen/T80IHC,1,0,Republik_unter_Druck.html.

Burleigh, Michael. *The Third Reich: A New History*. Hill and Wang, 2001.

Carpathian German Homepage. "Carpathian German History." http://www.geocities.com/ycrtmr/history.htm?20096#History.

Český statistický úřad. "Obyvatelstvo podle národnosti podle výsledků sčítání lidu v letech 1921 - 2001." http://www.czso.cz/csu/2008edicniplan.nsf/engt/24003E05E7/$File/4032080117.pdf.

Cornwall, Mark. "'National Reparation'?: The Czech Land Reform and the Sudeten Germans 1918-38." *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 75, No. 2 (Apr., 1997): 259-280.

Deutsche Welle. "Stoiber enters Sudeten row, defends expellees." http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,2559416,00.html?maca=en-rss-en-all-1573-rdf.

Eberhardt, Piotr and Owsinski, Jan. *Ethnic Groups and Population Changes in 20th century Central-Eastern Europe*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2003.

Economist. "Language rows between Slovakia and Hungary." http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story_id=14140437.

Fullbrook, Mary. *A Concise History of Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Glassheim, Eagle. "National Mythologies and Ethnic Cleansing: The Expulsion of Czechoslovak Germans in 1945." *Central European History*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (2000): 463-486.

Goebbels, Joseph. *The Goebbels Diaries*. Trans. by Lochner. Garden City, NY: Country Life Press, 1948.

Jenkins, Jolyon. "The Sudeten Germans' forgotten fate." http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3466233.stm.

Kann, Robert. *A History of the Habsburg Empire, 1526-1918*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974.

Karpatskonemecky spolok na Slovensku. "Karpatendeutsche: Vorwort." http://www.kdv.sk/kn.html.

Kroeger, Alix. 2003. "Fischer against Sudeten monument." http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3182123.stm.

Kucera, Jaroslav. *Odsunove ztraty sudetonemeckeho obyvatelstva*. Prague: Federalni ministerstvo zahranicnich veci, 1992.

Lumans, Valdis O. "The Ethnic German Minority of Slovakia and the Third Reich, 1938-45." *Central European History*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Sep., 1982): 266-296.

Migration Citizenship Education. "Ethnic cleansing in post-World War II Czechoslovakia: the presidential decrees of Edvard Benes, 1945-1948." http://www.migrationeducation.org/15.1.html?&rid=14&cHash=837b8c7ccb.

Murashko and Noskova. *Natsional'no-territorial'nyi vopros v kontekste poslevoennykh real'nostei Vostochnoi Evropy, 1945-1948*. Moscow: Rossiiskaia akademiia nauk, 1995.

Naimark, Norman. *Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.

O'Brien, Patrick K. *Oxford Atlas of World History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. (For a map of Sudetenland)

Overmans, Rüdiger. *Personelle Verluste der deutschen Bevolkerung durcht Flucht und Vertreibung*. Dzieje Najnowsze, 1994.

Prague Daily Monitor, "PN Nečas slams Zeman over Sudeten German remarks," http://praguemonitor.com/2013/04/25/pn-ne%C4%8D-slams-zeman-over-sudeten-german-remarks.

Prague Monitor. "Sudeten German leader thanks outgoing PM Necas." http://praguemonitor.com/2013/06/18/sudeten-german-leader-thanks-outgoing-pm-necas.

Radio Praha. "Czech police investigation names two responsible for June 1945 murder of Sudeten Germans." http://www.radio.cz/en/article/116881.

Radio Praha. "Memories of World War II in the Czech Lands: the expulsion of Sudeten Germans." http://www.radio.cz/en/article/65421.

Radio Praha. "Ondřej Matějka on the uncomfortable issue of the Sudetenland." http://www.radio.cz/en/article/110831.

Richter, Jan. "Beneš decrees re-surface in Czech presidential race." Český rozhlas. http://www.radio.cz/en/section/curraffrs/benes-decrees-re-surface-in-czech-presidential-race.

Ryback, Timothy W. " Dateline Sudetenland: Hostages to History." *Foreign Policy*, No. 105 (Winter, 1996): 162-178.

Speer, Albert. *Inside the Third Reich: Memoirs by Albert Speer*. Translated by Richard and Clara Winston. New York: Macmillan Company, 1970.

"SS-3: Assassination of Reinhard Heydrich." Kaplan Productions, DVD Video.

Štatistický úrad SRN. "Nemecké obyvateľstvo v SR podľa sčítania v roku 2001."

Statistisches Bundesamt Deutschlands (SBD). "Die deutschen Vertriebungsverluste" (1958).

Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft. "1919-1945." http://www.sudeten.de/cms/?Historie:1919_-_1945#Opfer.

"German Sudetenland group revises charter to exclude 'reclamation of homeland.' Deutsche Welle, 2015. www.dw.de/german-sudetenland-group-revises-charter-to-exclude-reclamation-of-homeland/a-18288165.

Time. "Putting the past to rest." http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,901020318-216394,00.html.

Weitz, John. *Hitler's Diplomat: The Life and Times of Joachim von Ribbentrop*. New York: Tichnor & Fields, 1992.

Wheeler, Charles. "Czechs' hidden revenge against Germans." http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2536261.stm.

Zachovalova, Katerina. "Czech Republic's EU holdout has public support." *Time*. http://time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1931664,00.html?xid=yahoo-feat?artId=1931664?contType=article?chn=world.

Zentrum gegen Vertreibung. "History of the German expellees and their homelands." http://www.z-g-v.de/english/aktuelles/?id=56#karpaten.

Suggested reference: "SS-3: Assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, Kaplan Productions". A DVD movie showing the social and domestic policies of Heydrich and the Czech resistance that ended in his assassination by Czech nationalists.

Ondřej Matějka's *Lost Sudetenland / Zmizelé Sudety*.

Alena Wagnerová's *Hrdinové Naděje" / Heroes of Hope*.

Population Statistics

1910- by end of Habsburg Empire, total population of Germanic half of Habsburg Empire (including Bohemia/Czechs) is 28,000,000, with 23% Czech and 35.6% German including Austria. In Hungarian Habsburg Slovakia, approx. 200,000 Carpathian Germans (~6.7%).

1918-1930- approx. 3,149,800 Germans in all of independent Czechoslovakia (28.8% of population)

1938- 129,000 Carpathian Germans in the divided Nazi Slovakia. Rises to 135,408 in 1940 due to labor settlement.

1945- before expulsions, 3,295,000 Sudeten and Carpathian Germans in all of reunited Czechoslovakia (according to SBD 1958, 3,274,000 total Germans including expelled temporary workers)

1950- after expulsions, only159,938 in all Czechoslovakia (from 28.8% to 1.8%). Only 5,200 Carpathian Germans in Slovakia region (from about 7% to only .1%) .

1991- 48,600 Germans in all Czechoslovakia (.5%). Large peaceful emigration from 1950-2000 for economic reasons.

2001- 39,106 Germans and 14,672 Hungarians in the independent Czech Republic today (.4%), and 5,405 Carpathian Germans in Slovakia (.1%).

Sources- [1], [2], [3], [4], Kant 605-6, Štatistický úrad SRN, SBD 1958, and Eberhardt 150-155.

Famous Persons

Johann Boehm (1895-52)- chemist

Rudolf Dellinger (1857-1910)- composer in Austria

Herbert Feigl (1902-88)- Austrian philosopher

Oskar Schindler (1908-74)- a controversial Sudeten German entrepreneur who has been accused of Jewish and Polish slave labor exploitation but ultimately rescued at least 1,000 Jews who escaped to Israel and the United States. He is depicted in the film, 'Schindler's List'.

Reinhold Elstner (1920-1995)- former soldier who lit himself on fire in Germany in protest for what he considered the betrayal of the 15,000,000 expelled Germans by the German government

Eduard Shön (1825-79)- composer in Austria

Martin Glaessner (1906-89)- geologist and paleontologist

Rudolf Püschel- writer, historian, and survivor expelled from Czechoslovakia, now living and writing in California

Gustav Karl Laube (1839-23)- geologist and paleontologist

Kurt Knispel (1921-45)- a Nazi tank sergeant who destroyed more tanks than almost any other during the war

Peter Glotz (1939-2005)- German politician, one of the leaders of the Federation of Expellees for Sudeten Germans

Peter Grünberg (1939-..)- Nobel-prize winning physicist

Konrad Henlein (1889-1945)- the leading Nazi and Sudeten German nationalist in the Sudetenland who fomented inter-ethnic conflict and supported a German annexation of the region. Later a Reichstag politician and a leader of the Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia.

Rudolf Jung (1882-45)- one of the most rabid Antisemites and pro-Nazi Sudeten Germans

Robert Mayer-Harting (1874-48)- a Sudeten German politician who operated within Czechoslovak politics prior to the annexation of the Sudetenland

Gregor Mendel (1822-84)- chemist, scientist, and geneticist

Augustin Schramm (1907-48)- Sudeten German Communist leader and partisan who escaped the Nazi takeover and supported the Communists in post-war Communist Czechoslovakia before being executed by controversial causes

Josef Pfitzner (1901-45)- Sudeten German Nazi historian and writer in Austria before and after the Anschluß

Fritz Wittmann (1933-..)- German politician and one of the leaders of the Federation of Expellees for Sudeten Germans

Ferdinand Porsche (1875-1951)- one of the most significant figures in automobile history and industry, leader of the Porsche company, and a controversial figure working closely with Nazi Germany

Suggested Websites and Organisations

Perlich, Herbert. *Exit Bohemia* - a recommended family biography on the personal traumas and experiences of displacement out of the Sudetenland before, during, and after WWII. Available on Nook and Kindle.

Czech documents archive - The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes - click here.

Slovak documents archive - Nation's Memory Institute- click here.

Kulturverband tschechoslowakischer Bürger deutscher Nationalität (Cultural Association for Czech[oslovak] Citizens of German Nationality)- one of the only legal German groups in the socialist period - click here.

Landeszeitung der Deutschen in Böhmen, Mähren, und Schlesien - minority newspaper in Czech Republic. Click here.

Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft (Sudeten German Community in Germany) - click here.

Antikomplex - a Czech organisation bringing awareness to the Sudeten Germans - click here.

Sudetendeutsches Büro Prag (Sudeten German Bureau in Prague) - click here.

Sudetendeutsche Jugend (Sudeten German Youth) - click here.

Museum of Carpathian German Culture (in Slovak and German) - click here.

Deutscher Böhmerwaldbund - click here.

Karpatendeutsche.de (Carpathian German Association) - click here.

Karpatenblatt (a Carpathian German newspaper in Slovakia)- click here.

Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft in Bayern (Sudeten German Community in Bavaria) - click here.

Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft in Österreich (Sudeten German Community in Austria) - click here.

Institute for Research of Expelled Germans / Institut für Vertriebenenforschung ® Copyright ongoing since 2009. Read our Privacy Policy for privacy, and legal information. Property of Director James Mayfield.